

## COUNTY GENERAL PLANS

9041

(No. 7 September, 1991)

California Government Code, Section 65302(i), requires all counties to address Fire Safe standards in the safety element of their general plan; specifically, evacuation routes, peak load water supplies, minimum road widths and clearances around structures. This was to be completed by 1974. Most counties did address some level of Fire Safe measures in their general plan. However, many did not. Even where they did address Fire Safe standards, the standards are widely varied in specifics and effectiveness. On the other hand, several counties have adopted strong Fire Safe ordinances that require strong fire protection measures. **CDF, as the fire agency responsible for protecting SRA, believes that firefighter safety is an issue that crosses governmental boundaries, and is an issue that requires statewide commitment.**

As the State's wildland fire protection agency, CDF becomes a responsible agency on many projects in SRA, requiring receipt and review of project environmental documentation. Where deficiencies in the General Plan are identified, the Director's Office and the Board of Forestry should be notified. The notice should include a clear description of the deficiency and recommendations or alternatives for correction. The Sacramento headquarters Environmental Coordinator and Fire Prevention Engineering Officer will coordinate these activities.

Information on the county general plan, the development process, and strategic fire planning can be found in A Discussion of the County General Plan and the Role of Strategic Fire Protection Planning, prepared under contract for CDF on September 30, 1989, as well as in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research publications: Planning, Development and Zoning Laws; County General Plan Guidelines; and CEQA: the California Environmental Quality Act, Statutes and Guidelines.

## PLANNING FOR FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY

9041.1

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Although wildfire is a hazard wherever people and developments intrude upon the wildlands, the degree of hazard and the required amount of fire prevention and safety measures vary from area to area. A fire hazard severity classification system based on three factors has been developed to provide land-use planners a practical and logical system for classifying the severity of fire hazard in California's wildlands. The expected result is construction and development commensurate with the on-site hazards and risks. General Plans and the resulting zoning ordinances should reflect these conditions. Fuel type, slope, fire weather, and frequency of occurrence of different levels of burning indices (BI) are the primary criteria for identifying and classifying the severity of the fire hazard in any given area. The original system was established in 1973 as the result of a Housing and Urban Development grant (A Fire Hazard Severity Classification System for California's Wildlands, 1973). The system was revised in 1985 as required by the legislature for implementation of the State Fire Marshal's requirement to adopt a fire resistant roofing and attic opening regulation applicable to SRA (Instructions for Zoning Fire Hazard Severity in State Responsibility Area in California, CDF, December 1983).

These maps will serve as a basic tool in defining fire hazard severity and effective administration of fire safety measures. The official maps (7.5 minute USGS quadrangles) are located in room 1653-10, at 1416 9th Street, Sacramento, California, 95814. Copies of these maps are found in each unit and copies have been distributed to each county planning office.

## **TIMING**

**9041.2**

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Comprehensive land-use plans should be prepared well in advance of development and should be prepared and reviewed relative to fire hazard severity zones and anticipated development. In this way, problems can be resolved before the projected development is begun. Situations hazardous to life and property that are allowed to develop because of lack of land-use planning are generally beyond correction. In such cases, all concerned must acknowledge and be willing to accept the resultant level of risk and the inevitable damages from wildfire unless fuel modification programs can be integrated into the overall plan to reduce loss and damage.

The Fire Hazard Severity Zones should be used by local government planners to classify degrees of fire hazard in wildland areas and specify conditions under which the use and development of specific areas can take place. The classification system can also provide a base for detailed fire hazard zoning. In addition, the future use of the California Fire Economics Simulator (CFES), as a part of a series of analytical programs, may assist in identifying the effect of development, whether fire safe or not, to CDF's wildland fire protection mission.

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